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Impact of Employee-Organization Congruence on Job Satisfaction and Job Performance among Factory Employees in the Sri Lankan Large Apparel Sector

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Abstract

In the field of human resource management the previous researches emphasized the employee-organization congruence (EOC) had a significant relationship with the job performance of employees in various sectors. However slight attention has been paid to conceptual constructs such as job satisfaction as a mediator between the EOC and job performance. Thus, this paper attempts to fill this gap by empirically examining the impact of EOC on job satisfaction and job performance among factory employees in 17 large apparel firms in Sri Lanka. A total of 384 self administered questionnaires were distributed among respondents and 328 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 85%. The data was analyzed by using descriptive analysis and structural equation methods (SEM). The study discloses that EOC have significant positive relationships with job performance. Further, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between EOC and job performance. Therefore, the study findings suggest that the better EOC in the large apparel sector not only leads to better performance, but also linked to satisfaction of factory employees.

Keywords: Employee-Organization Congruence, Job Performance, Job Satisfaction, Sri Lankan Apparel Sector, Structural Equation Methods

Introduction

Organizations are experiencing unfavorable pressures of competition generated by globalization, technological changes and many other forces in the environment. One of the methods for organizations to withstand these storms is through detecting potential in terms of the organizations spirit of its employees. The most precious asset in any organization today is not its activities, the production line, its branches or the inventory in the warehouse, but its employees-the people who make up the organization (Lippiec, 2001). As a result, employees are assets that need to be selected, retained and managed for the organizations success (Kehoe & Wright, 2013).

Any organization is concerned with improving employee productivity and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of work processes, as demand for better quality services from customers and clients, and the community at large continue to escalate (Augus, *et al.* 2007; Hamdan, 2011). An organization will achieve the above targets by understanding the employees' interaction within an organizations setting and how employees performance can be improved.

Person-Environment congruence (PEC) is a general framework; it combines person, situation and process variables when studying human behavior and has proven influential in the studies of how organizations function and change (Caldwell, *et al.* 2004). Considering the importance of theoretical and empirical explanation of the PEC concept and its framework is central to this study. There were different aspects of PEC this study specifically focuses on one aspect i.e. Employee-organization congruence (EOC). Kristof (1996) described EOC as

the match between employees' an organizations' atmosphere which is created when: (a) one group satisfies the needs of other groups or (b) they change equal characteristics or (c) both".

Bills berry *et al.* (2005), explains there is a link between the EOC with JP. The EOC model has normally viewed JP as a "predictor of outcome" (Schneider, *et al.* 2000, p.64). It implies that improvement of a congruence level has a positive impact on JP, whereas a lack of congruence has a negative impact on JP (Mackinnon, *et al.* 2007; Perera, *et al.* 2013). Further, Brown *et al.* (2005) describe EOC and JP having a relationship with job related attitudes. Thus, employees are satisfied, committed to achieve their performance and profit targets for the organization. Hence, this study focuses on job related attitude of job satisfaction (JS) as a mediating variable between the EOC and the JP relationship in the Sri Lankan large apparel sector. This study selected the apparel sector mainly, because the export contribution and growth rate of apparel firms decreased after 2005 especially when Bangladesh and China entered the apparel sector and their market position has increased over Sri Lanka (Central bank of Sri Lanka, 2010).

Problem Contexts

Today the Sri Lankan apparel industry is confronted with a serious problem. Factory employees are not being retained for the long term in one organization. Reasons are attributed to the cost of living which increases from time to time due to the global economic situation and so the employees demand higher salaries (Fernando, *et al.* 2010). Due to cost cutting, organizations cannot afford the higher pay. After 2004, Sri Lanka's apparel industry faced problems due to the completion of the multi-fiber agreement. As a result, it badly affected the export market quotas and reduced the number of factories from about 800 to 350 (Wijesinghe, 2009). There are job opportunities for between 10,000 to 12,000 factory employees in the factories of the free trade zone and the average retention rate of these workers is five years (Deerasinghe, 2001). There is a problem in retaining employees especially in free trade zone areas, because employees are leaving the industry. As a result, it is difficult to achieve apparel sector targets consistently. Effective employees are essential for achieving the organizations objectives (Liu, *et al.* 2010). Therefore; employee performance is an important factor that could contribute to organizations gaining the competitive edge in productivity. In managing resources, the most critical, as well as the most difficult area, is managing employees. It is critical, because effective JP mainly depends on the employees of an organization. Therefore, the EOC concept is pivotal to the organization in order to enhance performance.

Based on the availability of existing literature, there is evidence that there exists a gap in the theoretical explanations relating to impact of EOC on JS and JP in the Sri Lankan large apparel sector. Additionally, the area under discussion has been extensively considered in western countries, but there is a severe dearth of such studies in Sri Lanka. Therefore, problem statement of this study is, "To what extent EOC impact on JS and JP among factory employees in the Sri Lankan Large apparel sector?"

To address the study gap the following research questions were formulated:

- i. What are the demographic factors that have a significant relationship within the employee-organization congruence?
- ii. How does employee-organization congruence create a relationship with job performance?

- iii. How does job satisfaction mediate the relationship between employee-organization congruence and job performance?

To solve the above research questions, the following objectives are developed:

- i. To define the employee-organization congruence in terms of demographic factors.
- ii. To study the relationship between employee-organization congruence and job performance.
- iii. To identify how job satisfaction mediate the employee-organization congruence and job performance relationship.

Literature Review

EOC is embedded in the broader concept of PEC. EOC is an indirect measure where employees are asked to describe both their own personal values and their organizational values (Edward, *et al.* 2008). There are three approaches to measure EOC, such as subjective, perceived and objective congruence (Cable & Judge, 1996). JP is the set of worker's behaviors that can be monitored, measured, and assessed achievement in individual level (Muchinsky, 2003). There are different theories in the JP area. Cox and Nkomo theory (1986), Schermerhon, *et al.* theory (1988) and Acton proposed five factor models (2002) theory. Aamodt (2009) defines JS as "the attitude, an employee has toward his job." There are different models developed in the JS field. Namely, the questionnaire- Minnesota Satisfaction (MSQ) developed by Weiss, *et al.* in 1967, Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Smith *et al.* 1969, Job Characteristics Model (JCM) explained by Hackman & Oldham, 1976 (Edward, *et al.* 2008).

Employee-Organization Congruence and Job Performance

Some studies have examined the negative relationships of EOC and JP (Poon, 2004; Rod, 2008) According to Kristof's (1996) summary of empirical results, support the positive effects of EOC on JP (Ambrose, *et al.* 2008; Liu, *et al.* 2010). EOC has an important implication for the employee's performance (Kotter and Haskett, 1992). EOC is a better predictor of JP and investigated how employee integrates their perceptions of EOC when forming work attitudes (Kristof-Brown, 2000). They found that EOC has a unique impact on JP. Nevertheless, Meta-analyses resulted in estimating the EOC as a predictor of JP (Westerman and Cyr, 2004).

Employee-Organization Congruence and Job Satisfaction

Better EOC makes it easier for employees for employment and the communicate with other organizational employees and receive their support with regards to work, which in turn is likely to result in employees feeling more satisfied with their jobs (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Previous researchers examined the positive relationship with EOC and JS (Iplik, et al. 2011; Jung and Takeuchi, 2013; Kim et al. 2013; Maden and Kabasakal, 2013). Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) found in their study of a trucking company in the United States that EOC had a positive effect on JS. Tepeci and Bartlett (2002) also found that EOC was positively related to JS.

Job Satisfaction and Job Performance

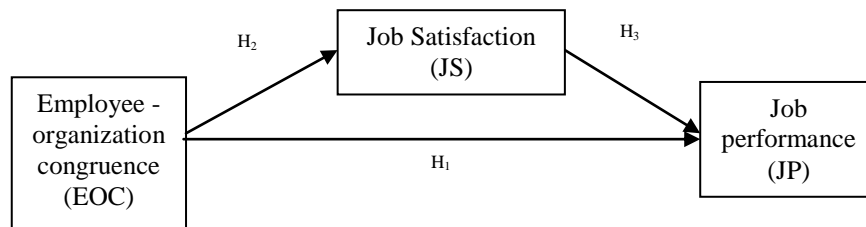
EOC theory suggests that similarity between employees and the organizations values lead to satisfied employees on the job and enhanced performance at their jobs leading them toward accomplishing the organizations goals (Chatman, 1989). This finding is similar to JS and JP

literature: Kristof-Brown, *et al.* (2005); Kristof (1996) and O’Reilly, *et al.* (1991). Accordingly, this study proposes that JS are positively related to JP.

Research Methodology
Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework (Figure 1) is comprised of three constructs- independent variable is EOC, dependent variable is JP and mediating variable is JS.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Hypotheses Development

Based on the conceptual framework developed for the study, following hypotheses were outlined:

- H₁: There is a significant impact of EOC on JP among factory employees in the large apparel sector.
- H₂: There is a significant impact of EOC on JS among factory employees in the large apparel sector.
- H₃: There is a significant positive impact of JS on JP among factory employees in the large apparel sector.

Research Strategy

This study is descriptive in nature and attempts to examine impact of EOC on JS and JP of factory employees. The study which was conducted in non-contrived setting and a single cross sectional design was employed to collect data.

Sample

There were 87 largest apparel firms in Sri Lanka (BOI, 2011). Then random selection of 20%; i.e. 17 largest apparel firms was done. After that systematic sampling method used and every 5th name of the factory was selected as a sample. Further, the standard statistical analysis of structural equation modeling (SEM) recommends a sample of between 300 to 400 as being more than sufficient (Weston, *et al.* 2006). A number of closely related EOC studies (Jung & Takeuchi, 2013; Kim, *et al.* 2013; Maden & Kabasakal, 2013) used a sample size of less than or close to 400. These studies also used SEM as a tool of analysis. Thus, this study considered the main sample size as 384 respondents.

Reviewing demographic factors, the majority of factory employees belong to the female group (72%). In terms of age, most factory employees are below 35 years (87%). The 70% of the respondents are married, this is identical to the percentage who fall within the age group 26-30 years. A majority (66%) of factory workers have more than GCE Ordinary level qualifications. These results tend to agree with the findings of similar studies done by Wickramasinghe and Jayawardana (2009). Approximately 90% of the workers have less than five years work experience.

Questionnaire Development

The variables selected for the questionnaire design were chosen after an extensive review of the literature and the researcher made slight alterations to some statements in the questionnaire in order to make them suitable within the Sri Lankan context. Respondents of the factory employees had a non-English speaking background. Primarily, the questionnaire was designed in English and then translated into Sinhala. The response categories for each item in the questionnaire were anchored by 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree). Finally 384 questionnaires were distributed to factory employees.

Operationalization

Employee-Organization Congruence

For this study, the following working definition adaption from Meyer, *et al.* (2010) was used with regard to the construct of EOC. “How employees value congruence with organization values”. This study mainly pays attention on perceived congruence method and direct measures have been used to assess the congruence between respondent and his organization. Consistent with previous EOC literature (Edward, *et al.* 2008; Hamdan, 2011), considered EOC as a multidimensional construct. Measurement scales for the dimensions of the EOC were developed based on the O’Reilly, *et al.* (1991) scale. It consists of seven sub domains; innovation (5 items), outcome orientation (5 items), aggressiveness (3 items), supportiveness (4 items), team orientation (4 items), rewards (3 items) and decisiveness (3 items).

Job Performance

The working definition of JP was: “The effectiveness of employees’ behavior that effects to achieve the organizational objectives” Motowidlo (2003). To capture the domain of the JP an initial set of 17 items are used: Performance traits (6 items), task performance (6 items) and social behavior (5 items). The three items above have been used by many researchers (Boon,*et al.*2011; Hussin, 2011) to examine the JP.

Job Satisfaction

For this study purpose, JS was defined, adopting from Aamodt (2009), “The feelings of employees to their work”. The JS construct consists of five sub domains work itself (5 items), pay (4 items), supervision (4 items), co-worker (5 items) and working conditions (4 items) (Weiss, *et al.* 1967). Most JS related studies (Kim, *et al.* 2013; Liu, *et al.* 2010; Perera, *et al.* 2014) used above mentioned indicators to measure JS.

Demographic Characteristics

This study considered nine demographic characteristics (nature of the job, gender, age, civil status, highest educational qualification, experience, income level, number of dependents and distance between the current residence and workplace).

Confirmatory factor analysis

As explained by Garver and Mentzer (1999), SEM is a statistical tool that brings the measurement model and the structural model into a simultaneous statistical test. Thus, this study, consider the two-stage approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1998) of SEM. Further, considered the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) method for analyzing the two-stage approach in Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). CFA was used to confirm if the values for indicators are a true reflection of the values in the latent variable (Chinna, 2013).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability of the CFA tested through the Cronbatch’s alpha value was more than .7 (Hair, *et al.* 1995). This study’s construct validity is assessed through convergent and discriminant validity methods. The convergent validity of the constructs assessed through average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeding the standard value of .5 (AVE >.5); all the composite reliability (CR) values exceed the .6 (CR >.6) and CR>AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Steenkamp and Trijp (1991) explained the standardized factor loadings were greater than .5 which indicates the convergent validity of the model. Discriminant validity established through comparing the correlation coefficients among each and every construct with the AVE of each construct. All the AVE values exceeded the square value of correlation coefficients (R²), ensuring the discriminant validity of the main survey (Hair, *et al.* 2010).

Unidimensionality

To ensure each construct of the study is measured by multiple indicators and each indicator measure only a single construct that was examined for unidimensionality through CFA provided by the AMOS. Hair, *et al.* (1995) identified three main categories of model fit: absolute, incremental and parsimonious. Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) shows the degree to which the actual or observed covariance matrixes predicted by the estimated model. GIF value range from 0 to 1, if it is greater than .9 this represents a strong fit (Hair, *et al.* 1998); Root Mean Square Error Approximation Index (RMSEA), the discrepancy per degree of freedom measured in terms of the population and it is relatively insensitive to the sample size; Adjusted Goodness of Fit (AGFI) is extension of GFI, which is adjusted by degree of freedom for the proposed model to the null model. Hair, *et al.* (1995) mentioned AGFI value ≥ .9 indicates the best fit and if its value is > .8 indicates marginal fit; Comparative fit index (CFI) compares the existing model fit with a null model which assumes the latent variables in the model are uncorrelated; the relative chi-square-to decide the model adequacy of fit. This study also considered modification indices to examine during assessment of the model fit of the structural model to identify the direction of the modification.

Screening the Problematic Statements

Initially 30 questionnaires were distributed to the participants for the pilot study in two factories and 24 responses were received. The pilot study was carried out to collect data in order to validate and refine the questionnaire before it was administered in the main survey. The elimination was based on items that had low reliability coefficients when estimating Cronbatch’s alpha for appropriate scale (Sekaran & Boughie, 2010). This resulted in the loss of 6 statements out of 65 questions in the questionnaire (refer Table 1) due to lack of inter-item consistency reliability.

Table 1: Summary Results of the Study

Construct	Original Items	No.of delete items	AVE	Cronbatch alpha	KMO	Composite Reliability
Job Performance (JP)	17	0	.643	.809	.633	.878
EOC	26	6	.619	.778	.707	.826
Job satisfaction (JS)	22	0	.723	.898	.829	.939

Data Analysis

Stem and leaf plot, box plot and whisker diagram methods were used to check the outliers in the data set (Chinna, *et al.*, 2012) and all six outliers were removed before conducting the

analysis. However, 328 usable questionnaires were received and the analysis was done by using them. The skewness (less than 3) and kurtosis (less than 10) values of this study are within the recommended levels indicating univariate normality of the data (Kline, 2005). Then researcher developed the measurement and structural model of the study. The summary of the overall (initial and final) structural model fit indices are as follows:

Table 2: Summary of the Structural Model Results

Fit indices	Structural model	
	Initial	Final
No. of items	59	47
Chi square (df)	1002.82 (671)	976.32 (664)
Chi square/df	1.494	1.469
AGFI	.801	.936
GFI	.824	.930
CFI	.812	.934
TLI	.868	.952
RMSEA	.099	.047
P value	.000	.064

The final structural model reduces Chi -square value by 26.5, df value by 07 and $p = .064$ ($p < .001$); it also improves other fit indices: GFI-.930, AGFI-.936, CFI-.934, TLI-.952. Also the RMSEA value is (.047) above the recommended level. Therefore 47 items in the final structural model adequately fit with the data (Table 2). Further it emphasizes that all items make a comparable contribution to the operationalising of each construct. Considering the final structural model all the relationships were statistically significant ($p < .05$). The regression weights for the final structural model are as follows:

Table 3: The Regression Weights of the Final Structural Model

		Unstd. estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Std. estimate
JS	EOC	.685	.053	3.894	<.001	.586
EOC	JP	.973	.067	2.596	.009	.281
JP	JS	.269	.057	5.445	<.001	.207

By examining the test of multivariate normality, the critical ratio value for multivariate kurtosis was shown to be more than 5. Hence the assumption of multivariate normality is not met. Thus, the 1000 bootstrap re-sample method for testing normality was assessed. It indicates the Bollen-stine p value is .131, which is more than .5. Thus the model ‘correctness’ is acceptable. The final structural model standardized residual co variances are less than two in absolute value and the model is deemed a good fit for the data (Kline,2005). Examining the Mahalanobis distance (Table 4) p1 is more than .001 (Kline, 2005). The observation is not an outlier and the highest distance is 88.185 .

Table 4: Mahalanobis Distance

Observation number	Mahalanobis d-squared	p1	p2
35	88.185	.001	.000
59	88.178	.001	.000
307	87.452	.001	.000
96	86.393	.001	.000
43	83.503	.002	.000
152	81.512	.002	.000

The CR and AVE for the final structural model items were more than .6 and .5 respectively (Table 5). Hair, *et al.* (2010) explained the convergent validity exists when the AVE value is greater than .5 and the CR value is greater than AVE.

Table 5: Average Variance Extracted and Composite Reliability Values for the Final Structural Model

Measurement items	AVE	CR
Job satisfaction	.71	.90
Job performance	.76	.86
Employee-organization congruence	.73	.91

Further Table 6, provided the AVE which is greater than EOC and JS corresponding construct correlations (R^2), which is evidence of discriminant validity of the construct (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Chinna, 2013).

Table 6: Testing for Discriminant Validity for the Final Structural Model

	EOC	JS
EOC	.73*	
JS	.078**	.76*

*AVE ** R^2

Employee-Organization Congruence with Demographic Factors

The one way ANOVA (Analysis of variance) method was used to identify the difference between EOC factors and demographic factors. The p value of the ANOVA test being greater than .05, expressed that there were no significant differences between the EOC and demographic factors (Chinna, *et al.* 2012).

Results of Testing the Hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant impact of EOC on JP.

H1 tests the impact between the independent variable of EOC and JP. The results (Table 3) show that there is a positive impact of EOC and JP ($\beta=.281$, $p<.05$). Thus, H1 is supported by the data.

H₂: There is a significant impact of EOC on job satisfaction.

As shown in Table 3, the path coefficient of EOC and JS in the proposed final model is positive and significant ($\beta=.586$, $p<.05$). Thus, H2 is supported by the data.

H₃: There is a significant positive impact of job satisfaction on job performance.

Hypotheses three tests the impact of JS and JP. The results (Table 3) show that ($\beta=.207$, $p<.05$) JS positively impact JP. Thus, H3 is supported by the data.

Testing the Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction on Employee-Organization Congruence and Job Performance

The indirect effect of EOC on JP (Table 7) is .300, 95% confidence interval (.080, .342, $P=.002$). Therefore JS mediate the EOC to the JP relationship.

Table 7: Indirect Effect of Employee-Organization Congruence to Job Performance

Variable effect	Indirect	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	P-value
Independent	EOC	EOC	EOC	EOC
Mediator JS	.000	.000	.000	.000
Dependent JP	.300	.080	.342	.002

The mediating effect of JS is .121 (Table 8). Hence, JS mediates (indirect effect is >.08) the EOC and JP relationship (Hair, *et al.* 2010).

Table 8: Mediating Effect of Employee-Organization Congruence

Relationships	Std.estimate	Mediating effects
JS <--- EOC	.586	.586 x .207 = .121
JP <--- JS	.207	

Testing of Relationship between Employee-Organization Congruence and Job Performance

Based on the final measurement model there is a strong positive relationship between EOC and JP (Table 9). The relationships were statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Table 9: Co variances of Employee-Organization Congruence and Job Performance

Relationship		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Decision
JP	<--> EOC	.651	.091	10.313	<.001	Yes

Discussion and Conclusion

To find out the answer to the first research question, this study examines the demographic factors with five EOC factors. Results indicated that there is no significant difference. In answering the first research question, the first objective of this study was satisfied, and makes a valuable contribution to the EOC factors and demographic factors relationship.

The second research question of this study attempts to examine the EOC and the JP relationship. The findings of this study emphasized that factory employees have a strong positive relationship (Table 9) with EOC and JP in the large apparel sector. These findings are in accordance with the argument made by Hamdan (2011); Kristoff-Brown (2000), that EOC and JP are the best predictors of understanding the employees’ relationship with the organization. The finding of this study is similar to the previous studies that reported the positive relationship between EOC and the JP (Perera, *et al.*, 2014; Westerman & Cyr 2004). As a result, this study empirically found support for the second research question that achieved the second objective by identifying substantially supporting evidence on the significance of the EOC being a prerequisite of JP.

The results of data analysis supported by JS mediate the EOC and JP relationship. The findings revealed (Table 8) that the mediating effect of JS is (.121). Therefore JS is total mediator between the EOC and JP. When a factory employee feels that there is congruence between his/her values and the values of the apparel firm, he/she will be more satisfied at work which in turn will have a positive impact on achieving high JP. The strength of these relationships is consistent with those found in previous research (Kristof -Brown, *et al.* 2005; Perera, *et al.* 2013; Verquer, *et al.* 2003) in the organization context. As a result, this study is in accordance with the third research question that satisfied the third objective by giving significant evidence on the mediating role of JS in the EOC and JP relationship in the large apparel sector.

Also the findings of this study largely support the hypothesized relationship proposed in the conceptual framework. This study does not pay attention to the congruence methods of subjective and objective congruence for assessing the EOC. The study is limited to a single sector. Future researchers should focus on other service sectors e.g. hospitals, banks, etc. In addition, this study merely focuses on the viewpoints of the factory employees working in apparel firms and as such, it may not be possible to generalize these findings to other levels of workers. The data has been selected from a single country, Sri Lanka and therefore, it may not be possible to generalize the findings to other countries.

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